



Dear Community Friends;

Fall/Winter Weather Precautions We All Can Take

An article in this past Sunday's Seattle Times by Richard Seven (**Campaign urges readiness for winter's trials** Sunday, October 18, 2009) reminded us about our annual experiences with adverse weather.

Think back to last year's paralyzing snow fall, the heavy rains of two years ago, and the wind storm of three years ago that knocked out power of thousands of homes for over a week. How did you fair back then? How prepared are you now? Below are some tips courtesy of the Seattle Office of Emergency Management, Seattle Public Utilities, the Seattle Department of Transportation and the Seattle Police Department. Some of these have been published in previous newsletters.

Help Keep Street Drains Clear

- Help keep street drains clear by removing debris — if it can be done safely. Blockages in the gutters or drains will hinder runoff, increase the risk of flooding. If the drain cannot be cleared, or if the cause of the blockage or flooding is uncertain, call Seattle Public Utilities at (206) 386-1800.
- Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) promotes an "adopt a drain" program. Volunteers are asked to help remove dirt, silt and debris from the top of the drains. Residents can pick up free cleanup supplies at SPU's warehouse at 3633 E. Marginal Way S. from 9 a.m. to noon, October 24th and 31st, and at Seattle Municipal Tower on Sixth Avenue in downtown Seattle on October 28th and 29th. For more information, call (206) 233-7187 or e-mail adoptadrain@seattle.gov.

Avoiding Frozen Water Pipes

- Shut off outside faucets, drain the water and protect them by insulating them with rags or foam covers. Pipes in exposed or unheated areas (attics, basements and garages) should be wrapped with insulating materials and tape, available at local hardware stores. Drain and remove all outdoor hoses, and shut off and drain in-ground sprinkler systems.
- Once the temperature drops below freezing, protect indoor sink pipes that are against exterior walls, by opening under-sink cabinet doors, allowing heat to circulate. During severe cold, allow the faucet farthest from your front door to slowly drip cold water. Set your thermostat no lower than 55 degrees Fahrenheit, day or night (even if you are away).
- Do not leave water running in unoccupied buildings.
- Do not use hair dryers to thaw frozen pipes!
- Know where the main water shut-off valve *inside* your home is located and how to shut it off. Also, know where the shut-off from the street water main *to* your home is located. If you need to shut-off the water from the main in the street to your home, ensure you have the proper tool. Contact SPU at (206) 386-1800 for questions about shutting off water mains and the tools needed to do so.
- If a water pipe breaks, immediately close the main shut-off valve to stop excessive flooding. If you cannot turn off the main shut-off valve, SPU customers can call (206) 386-1800 and a crew will turn off the water at the meter for a standard service charge.

Flooding and Landslides

- Consider getting flood insurance for your home, even if you do not live in a flood plain. Most homeowner's policies will cover burst pipes associated with your home, but may not cover water damage caused by flooding due to excessive rain or from a water source (street run-off, burst water main) outside the home.
- Heavy rain following closely after heavy snowfall can increase the chance of landslides due to soil saturation that reduces slope stability. Trees may also be more prone to fall in high winds when the ground is saturated. Property owners on slopes are advised to clear both drains on their buildings and storm drains near their property. If a landslide damages your property and you have an immediate concern for your safety, leave the premises and call 9-1-1.

- Seattle property owners with structures affected by or endangered by a landslide may contact the Department of Planning and Development at (206) 684-7899, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., for a rapid evaluation of damage. Such evaluations are not meant to provide a comprehensive assessment, which will need to be completed by a private structural or geotechnical engineer.

Cautions when Driving and Walking in Severe Weather

- Please exercise caution when going out doors during a storm. Downed power lines, objects in the road and fallen trees are not easy to spot at night.
- Treat all power lines as an electrical hazard until rendered safe by your electrical utility. In Seattle, contact Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City Light at (206) 684-3000 to report power outages and/or downed power lines.
- When driving, give yourself extra time. Slow down and allow plenty of room between you and the next vehicle. Brake more gently and give yourself a longer stopping distance.
- Use your headlights any time conditions make it difficult to see people or other vehicles.
- Be vigilant about other roadway users — especially pedestrians and bicyclists — during periods of low visibility.
- Anticipate standing water, and streets made slick as engine oil and grease mix with rainfall early in a storm. Plan alternative routes around Seattle's hills.
- Exercise caution when driving and walking! Cold temperatures often mean "black ice," which is treacherous for vehicles and pedestrians alike. Be careful when engaging hills and inclines.

Dealing With Power Outages at Home

Before an outage:

- Keep a preparedness kit with light sticks, flashlights, a battery-powered radio with extra batteries and a windup clock.
- Have a corded telephone available: Cordless phones will not work when the power is out.
- Have an alternative heat source and supply of fuel.

During an outage:

- Turn off lights and electrical appliances, except for the refrigerator and freezer. Even if it is dark, turn light switches and buttons on lamps or appliances to "off."
- Unplug computers to protect them from possible surges when the power is restored.
- Leave one lamp on so you will know when power is restored. Wait at least 15 minutes after power is restored before turning on other appliances.
- Avoid using candles because of the potential fire hazard if they are tipped over.
- Using a kerosene heater, gas lantern or stove inside the house can be dangerous. Maintain proper ventilation to avoid a buildup of toxic fumes.
- ***Do not use gas generators or charcoal heaters indoors.*** The potential for carbon monoxide poisoning is high. In previous years, use of these devices indoors for heating and power generation resulted in injuries and fatalities.

Keep Food Safe:

- Eat foods first that can spoil quickest.
- Your refrigerator's freezer will keep food frozen for up to a day. A separate, fully loaded freezer will keep food frozen for two days.
- Use an ice chest packed with ice or snow to keep food cold. Buy dry ice to save frozen food. Do not handle dry ice with your bare hands.

For more information about emergency preparedness, contact the Public Education Section of the Seattle Office of Emergency Management at (206) 233-7123. Also visit their website at www.seattle.gov/emergency. Other emergency preparedness resources include:

King County Office of Emergency Management: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/safety/prepare.aspx>

Federal Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtm>

Ready.gov: <http://www.ready.gov/>

Seattle-area Red Cross: <http://www.seattleredcross.org/>

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Captain David Emerick, South Precinct Commander Mark Solomon, Crime Prevention Coordinator